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ABSTRACT

This monograph provides an international perspective on key principles governing the education of children with disabilities and the review of educational provisions. Part A begins with an estimate of the global shortfall in education provision for those with disabilities and identifies principles and strategies for policymakers developing educational services. The principles focus on the rights to an education, to equality of opportunity, and to participation in society. The identified strategies address legislation, administrative support, educational provision, early childhood education, preparation for adult life, parental involvement, training, and research and development. Part B offers guidelines to policymakers and administrators for reviewing the following major elements of special education services: legislation, administration, early childhood education, school provision, transition from school to adult life, professional development, and support services. It suggests 40 key questions for conducting a review, with the questions and accompanying commentary considered to be appropriate for a variety of national systems. (Contains 22 references and suggested readings.) (DB)

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Educating children and young people with disabilities

Principles and the review of practice

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Principles and the review of practice

Seamus Hegarty

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Foreword

A series of international reports estimate that at least one child in ten is born with or acquires a serious impairment which, if no attention is given, could impede the development of the child.

About 80 percent of the estimated 200 million children in the world with disability are living in developing countries and very few receive good health care and education, and less than 2 percent receive special services of any kind.

The bleak international assessment is based on a series of reports across the continents. To understand these realities one need only visit any of the villages of Asia, Africa, Latin America or the Middle East, or any of the slums surrounding the cities in these areas. There one learns that along every road and path, in every cluster of dwellings, there are children who are being denied the possibility of personal development because they suffer impairments and because they are not receiving the benefits of the knowledge and skill that exist.

Certainly, the precise figures of disability estimations could be debated; however, one thing is clear: the need is there. This need is further compounded by poverty and underdevelopment but also by wars leading to devastation, creating a considerable social, economic, and emotional cost to the disabled persons, their families and the wider community.

To improve the situation will require time, but it primarily requires a commitment and a political will to bring about change – change of human attitudes and behaviour, the integration of new concepts into human service programmes, and the modification of development strategies.

On a more optimistic note, it can be demonstrated that many needed forms of assistance can be rendered through the appropriate application of resources already available to many of the families and communities in developing countries.

A modest enrichment of existing training programmes and basic health, welfare and education services can expand their coverage to include children with disabilities. In fact it is only through such improved application of existing human resources that there can be any hope of

giving effective help to the millions of children affected, or in danger of being affected, by disability.

Conscious of the magnitude of the needs and the limited resources, and bearing in mind the principles of normalization, integration and participation advocated by the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, the UNESCO Consultation on Special Education (1988) recognized integrated education and community-based rehabilitation as two complementary approaches to providing cost effective and meaningful education and training for disabled persons. Both measures aim at reaching out to the greatest number of disabled persons and their families. They are two vital components of a comprehensive global strategy.

The worldwide discrepancy between needs and provision has stimulated a reappraisal of educational strategies. Many countries have endorsed the framework for action of the World Conference on Education for All and are now taking steps to implement its recommendations and, as far as possible, enhance services for children with special educational needs (disabled) within the mainstream of regular education.

The present document raises important issues in this respect and discusses different ways to find possible solutions.

The process of change will succeed best with the initiative of governments and the participation of intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations, bilateral aid programmes, voluntary agencies and community groups in the countries concerned.

The views expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of UNESCO.

Introduction

Educating its young citizens with disabilities is a significant challenge for every nation. The school systems of developed countries face increasing pressure to raise standards, broaden curricula, become more technological, develop social and personal skills, pay greater attention to equal opportunities and generally prepare young people for a rapidly changing world. Small wonder then that the education of pupils with disabilities is not at the top of every educator's list of priorities.

All these pressures are found in poor countries as well, often with the desperate urgency of time running out, but there are two additional crucial problems. First, these countries suffer a paucity of resources that educators in developed countries can scarcely imagine. Second, the goal of education for all is a long way from being achieved in many countries and has to be accorded the highest priority. Again, it is all too easy for the education of those with disabilities to be deferred until other targets deemed more pressing have been met.

Whatever the other pressures on the education system and on public expenditure, it is imperative for every nation to secure appropriate provision for its young citizens with disabilities. Widespread experience has shown that even those with the most severe disabilities can profit from education; no child need now be regarded as ineducable. Moreover, it makes financial sense to educate those with disabilities since this makes them economically productive instead of being dependent on family and state for all of their lives. Education also enhances the quality of life for those with disabilities just as for other people; if anything, they are more dependent on education than others to shake off the limitations of the material here-and-now.

The fundamental reason for educating young people with disabilities is a moral one: they have a right as citizens to be educated. Education is not the preserve of an élite, whether it be one of wealth or of class or of ability. It is not justified by reference to economic prosperity, however much it may contribute toward it. It is a fundamental right of all citizens and no young person should be denied that right on grounds of disability any more than they should be denied it because they are female or members of an ethnic minority.

The purpose of this document is two-fold: to set out the key principles governing the education of children and young people with disabilities, and to provide a structure for reviewing the

provision that is made. Chapter 1 begins with an estimate of the global shortfall in educational provision for those with disabilities and then sets out basic principles that underly key strategies for policy makers in developing and enhancing the educational provision they make for children and young people with disabilities. Chapter 2 is concerned with reviewing provision. It identifies the major elements of provision – legislation, administration, early childhood education, school provision, transition from school to adult life, professional development and support services, and notes in respect of each the key questions that need to be asked in conducting a review. The questions are couched in a general way, since national systems vary so much, and each is accompanied by a commentary which sets it in context and points the way towards possible answers. It is hoped that this set of questions will assist senior policy makers and administrators to exercise their accountability in respect of the special educational provision for which they are responsible.

Seamus Hegarty

PART A

A statement of principles

Children and young people with disabilities need education no less than their peers. Yet, around the world very many of those with disabilities receive little or no education.

Part A summarizes estimates of the shortfall in appropriate educational provision. It sets out the basic principles underlying special educational provision. It addresses key strategies for policy makers in developing and enhancing the educational provision they make for children and young people with disabilities.

All children have the right to be educated. One of the tragedies of our time is that very many children are not educated and have no opportunity to go to school. This is compounded by the scarcity of educational opportunities in adult life.

The failure to provide education for all children ranks alongside famine and war as a major indictment of the current political order. It is also a significant challenge to it. A world with the technological and economic resources to achieve instantaneous global communication and put people into space can hardly say that educating all its children is impossible.

This challenge has all the more force where children and young people with disabilities[1] are concerned. Children and young people with disabilities, who ironically have the greatest need of education, are the least likely to receive it. This is true of developed and developing countries alike. In developed countries many children with disabilities are formally excluded from the education system or receive less favourable treatment within it than do other children, whereas in many developing countries the struggle to develop compulsory education for a majority of children takes precedence over meeting the special educational needs of those with disabilities.

Precise figures, particularly for developing countries, are difficult to establish but some studies are available which show the distressing scale of the problem. Ross (1988) summarized data gathered from thirteen countries in eastern and southern Africa. Table 1 shows that virtually all the countries had special education enrolments for approximately 0.1 per cent or fewer of the school-age population.

1. A precise definition is not being offered here. Terminology and categorization vary widely from country to country. The target group includes those who have physical or sensory impairments, those who in comparison with age peers have difficulties in learning and communication, and those whose behaviour cannot readily be contained in ordinary schools. What they have in common is a greater or lesser need for special educational provision over and above what the ordinary school offers to the generality of pupils. Estimates of the size of the group range from 10 to 20 per cent of the school-age population.

Table 1: Number of special education enrolments in thirteen African countries as a percentage of the school-age population

Percentage	No. of countries
Less than 0.1	7
Between 0.1 and 0.2	4
More than 1	1
No information	1
	13

Source: Adapted from Ross, 1988

A broader UNESCO survey conducted in 1986/87 found that thirty-four out of fifty-one countries (drawn from all continents) supplying information had fewer than 1 per cent of pupils enrolled in special educational provision (UNESCO, 1988). Table 2 shows that ten of these thirty-four had special educational provision available for less than 0.1 per cent of pupils.

Table 2: Number of special education enrolements as a percentage of the school-age population

Percentage	No. of countries
Less than 0.1	10
0.1 – 0.4	13
0.5 – 0.9	9
1.0 – 1.9	6
2.0 – 2.9	6
3.0 – 3.5	5
More than 3.5	2
No information given	7
	58

Source: UNESCO, 1988

To appreciate the full significance of these figures we need to set them against estimates of the need for special education. A major United Kingdom government report (United Kingdom, 1978) recommended for planning purposes the assumption that about one in six children at any time and up to one in five children sometime during their school careers will require some form of special educational provision' (para. 3.17). This concurs with an earlier United Nations estimate that 15 per cent of children needed special education or rehabilitation measures of some kind and that this proportion was higher in developing countries (United Nations, 1976).

The stark reality underlying these figures is that the great majority of children and young people with disabilities do not receive an appropriate education – if indeed they are offered any education. In many countries, less than one child in a hundred receives the special educational provision that he or she needs.

UNESCO has had since the early 1970s a major commitment to improving the provision of special education around the globe. In 1971 it published its first study of the present situation' in special education. This study was updated in the late 1980s (UNESCO, 1988). This commitment has been addressed particularly to action in developing countries, and major projects have been supported in African and Asian countries.

The two-year programme for 1990-1991 proposed to address the special educational needs of children and young people with disabilities through an integrated education approach and community–based programmes. The proposed action covered three main areas: (1) planning, organization and management of special educational provision; (2) teacher training for integrated education of children with disabilities; and (3) early childhood disabilities – identification, assessment and intervention.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the improvement of special educational provision by setting out the basic principles governing education for those with disabilities and drawing attention to strategies that policy makers can adopt to secure appropriate provision.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The basic principles underlying special education are very simple. Translating them into practice may be far from easy, but there is broad agreement on what they should be. The principles can be formulated in various ways. Here they will be set out in terms of three rights: the right to education, the right to equality of opportunity and the right to participate in society.

1. THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right of all children to education is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and reiterated in many national policy statements. Regrettably, millions of children are not accorded this right. This fact does not weaken the right or reduce its relevance. indeed, it makes action to secure its universal implementation all the more urgent. Children with disabilities are a major group for whom this right has still to be won in effective terms. Many countries – and educational policy makers – simultaneously accept the United Nations Declaration guaranteeing education for all and exclude children with disabilities from education. This is, to say the least, illogical. Either the United Nations Declaration is accepted in its sweeping simplicity and children with disabilities of whatever kind are brought into education, or the Declaration should be modified and tinkered with so that it fits the exigencies of current practice.

It is important to bear in mind that the right to education is a fundamental human right, something which all individuals have by virtue of the fact that they are human beings. In other words, it is not dependent on vocational or economic considerations. Education does of course make people more employable in a general way and can enhance their capacity to contribute to the economic well-being of the community, but neither of these is the reason why they are *entitled* to education. At a time when public expenditure is increasingly governed by market forces and instrumental views of education prevail, it is easy to lose sight of the inherent nature of the right to education. This is particularly significant where people with disabilities are concerned. Education may not succeed in making some people employable or economically self-sufficient, but that in no way reduces their entitlement to the resources that their education requires.

2. THE RIGHT TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Equality of opportunity raises very difficult questions. Like the right to education, the right to equality of educational opportunity is widely accepted as a general principle and largely ignored in practice. The problem here is greater than the customary gap between rhetoric and reality that is imposed by scarce resources and limited vision. Even where there is a commitment to implementing this right, it can be difficult to establish what is required in practice.

Equality of opportunity does not mean treating everybody in the same way. Thus, in education equal educational treatment is not the answer. Children are not the same and should not be treated as if they were. Indeed, the principle of justice requires that they be treated unequally. As a simple example, consider the education for blind children: if equal treatment means being exposed, along with peers, to teaching with a high visual content, this is manifestly not giving them equality of educational opportunity. What is required is a means of translating the general principle of equal opportunity into concrete rights that are meaningful at the level of actual educational provision. This is given in part by the notion of differential educational treatment. Since children are different from each other, they must be treated in different ways in order to reach common goals. This brings the general principle down to the domain of practical decisions about pedagogy and resource allocation. These decisions can be extremely difficult in practice, particularly when teaching expertise and resources are in short supply. Some such framework, however, is essential both to moving advocacy for special education beyond placid generalities and to ensuring a meaningful place for special education at the level of actual educational provision.

3. THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY

This right is often expressed in negative terms – people should not be discriminated against or suffer restrictions on their lives over and above those common to other people. In education it has become commonplace to speak of educating children in the 'least restrictive environment'. These negative formulations abound because barriers and obstacles to participation are more evident and easier to pinpoint than actual participation.

As far as education is concerned, the right to participate means that children must not suffer needless restrictions in their access to education, in the range of curricula on offer or in the quality of teaching they receive. They should not, without good reason, be educated separately from their age peers. Expressed positively, this means that children have the right to attend ordinary schools and to participate in the normal activities of the school alongside age peers unless there are specific reasons to the contrary. Where it is judged necessary to educate children in a segregated special school, care must be taken to ensure that the nature of the education on offer matches the mainstream curriculum as much as possible and that the quality of teaching is at least as good as it would be in an ordinary school.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

This section sets out a number of strategies which policy makers can adopt to improve the provision of special education in their countries. The topics covered are legislation, administrative support, educational provision, early childhood education, preparation for adult life, parental involvement, training and research and development. Much of the information on current practice at national level is drawn from a UNESCO survey conducted in 1986-1987 (UNESCO, 1988). This will be referred to as the UNESCO *Review*.

LEGISLATION

It may seem odd to start with legislation as a key strategy for improving special educational provision. Legislation is couched in generic terms and can be very distant from the point of implementation. There are several reasons, however, why appropriate legislation is of paramount importance. First, it can articulate and reinforce a country's policy on special education. Educational and social policies are usually more detailed and flexible than the legislation, if any, that underpins them. A legal framework can, however, hold the different elements of policy together, clarify ambiguities and resolve tensions among them.

Secondly, legislation can help to secure resources or the appropriate channelling of resources. Thus, legislation can be used to target expenditure on certain groups of children; it can require that provision be supported by certain administrative structures; it can insist on certain levels of teacher training; and it can require that special educational provision be made in ordinary schools.

Passing laws of itself achieves nothing, and legislating for these desirable outcomes is in no way to guarantee that they will be realized. This brings in two further functions of legislation: to draw attention to any discrepancies between policy and practice, and to give ammunition to those who seek change. Take parental involvement in decision-making, for example. There is a lot of rhetoric about taking account of parents' views but in practice they are often ignored. Legislation that guarantees their right to be consulted on their child's assessment and any decisions taken as a consequence can help to narrow the gap between rhetoric and practice by ensuring that parents are truly partners in the decision-making process. Without this legislative

support parents are dependent upon the goodwill of professionals and have no effective redress in the event of disagreement.

Finally, legislation can help to change attitudes. What is required by statute has more status than what is optional. A country that legislates for special educational provision confers legitimacy on that provision and makesit more likely that professionals, parents and the public will view it in a positive way.

It is worth noting that most countries in the UNESCO *Review* had legislation of some kind concerning the education of those with disabilities. (In a few cases pupils with disabilities were deemed to be included in the general legislation on education for all pupils.) Two-thirds of the countries referred to new legislation under discussion or about to be introduced. This ranged from loosely formulated discussion of the need for various legislative developments to definite plans to introduce regulations governing specific aspects of educational provision. A wide range of topics was covered – early intervention, family support, new curricula, developments in general education to facilitate integration, teacher training and administrative responsibility for mentally retarded children.

The UNESCO *Review* noted the different legislative baselines of the different countries but identified two tentative trends none the less: a general acknowledgement of the need to underpin developments in provision with appropriate legislative action and a tendency for the frameworks for special education and general education to move towards each other, albeit slowly.

Legislation in education is no panacea, and it would be easy to pick out examples where legislation has had a negative impact. There can be little doubt, however, that appropriate legislation is an essential tool in developing and maintaining an effective education system for children and young people with disabilities.

The key elements of appropriate legislation have been implied above – clear statement of policy, coherent framework for provision, conduit of resources and guarantee of consumers' rights. In addition, special education legislation should be based on a correct understanding of disabilities and their educational implications. There is a great deal of outmoded thinking on disability and special education, and it is very unfortunate when these defective understandings are built into legislation. National legislation must take account of a country's stage of development, but limited resources do not justify adopting laws that will lead down blind alleys and foster inappropriate forms of provision.

Finally, legislation must be enforced. Instruments are mere ornaments unless they are used. Legislative instruments likewise must feed into practice. Thus, provision must be made for implementation and monitoring if legislative action is to have its intended effect.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

The administration and organization of special education raise particular problems. These stem from the multiplicity of tasks to be carried out, the dispersion of responsibility for them and, in

many countries, the diversity of funding sources. Special education extends beyond education into health, social welfare and rehabilitation. As well as teachers, it involves psychologists, health workers and therapists.

The UNESCO *Review* found that education ministries were responsible for special education in most – though not all – cases. (Social affairs ministries were the usual alternative.) Frequently, however, this was not an exclusive responsibility: various responsibilities were vested in other ministries or shared with them. Thus, health ministries were often responsible for pre-school provision and labour ministries for vocational training and rehabilitation. In some cases particular groups of children were the sole responsibility of ministries other than education – for instance, mentally retarded children (health or social affairs) and delinquents (justice).

The most common administrative arrangement was to have within the ministry of education a separate department dealing with special education. Generally, the special education system ran parallel to the mainstream system, with modifications as judged necessary, and the function of the special education department was to provide the administrative structure for this parallel system. In some cases, the age range was divided up differently in the two systems or the special education system extended over a longer period of time. There were other organizational models. In some cases, special education was subsumed under the department dealing with primary education, reflecting the main thrust of provision. In other cases special education was administered as part of the general system, without any separate administrative structure.

About one-third of countries had a special education co-ordinating body at national level. These bodies had representatives from various government departments and non-governmental agencies concerned with special educational provision. They were charged with maintaining an overview of developments relating to children and young people (and sometimes adults as well) with disabilities.

The importance of appropriate administrative support for special education is twofold: it shapes the nature of the provision made, and it provides the co-ordination that is necessary.

The impact of the administrative arrangements on the nature of provision can be seen clearly in relation to integration. When special education is administered quite separately from the general education system, it is difficult to achieve much integration at the level of practice. Even if the policy is in favour of integration, the separation of funding, teacher supply and curriculum entailed by separate administrative arrangements places major obstacles in the way of implementing the policy.

This example shows that administrative structures are not neutral in their effect. They create the framework within which educational provision is made but also determine the nature of that provision to an extent. This framework can facilitate or obstruct setting up certain types of provision, and so can determine whether or not policy objectives are met.

The co-ordinating functions of administration are wide-ranging where special education is concerned. They can encompass planning, resource allocation, the supply and training of

personnel, buildings, materials and transport in addition to co-ordinating the different service elements. In many countries these functions entail activity, and corresponding administrative structures, at national, regional and local levels.

Financial arrangements impose another layer of complexity. While state funding is the predominant source of financing for special education, funding is also supplied by voluntary bodies, parents and, in some developing countries, aid programmes and international organizations. In many countries voluntary bodies, while no longer providing substantial funding, have through their legacy of past initiatives a central role in organizing educational and other provision for those with disabilities.

These various factors combine to underline the importance of having a strong and coherent administrative structure. When basic educational services are missing or inadequate, it can be tempting to disregard the need for administrative support. Expenditure on administration must be kept in proportion of course, and subject to regular review, but it would be shortsighted to scrimp on it unduly. An effective and appropriately resourced administrative service is essential to getting the best value from available resources and ensuring that they are expended in accordance with policy objectives.

The UNESCO Consultation on Special Education (Paris, 1988) attached major importance, for all countries, to the development of a realistic national plan, based on a clear statement of resources including personnel and backed by a national commitment at the highest decision–making level. Particularly within developing countries, resources are unlikely to be available to do everything that might be desired. Choices have to be made, affecting different disability groupings, age ranges, linguistic and cultural minorities, urban and rural dwellers, and so on. An important function of the national plan is to set priorities between competing claims. When resources are limited, rough justice may be all that is possible, but it is better that the criteria on which decisions are taken be made explicit so that they can be seen to be justified or challenged if not.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The whole point of special educational provision is to ensure that children and young people with disabilities receive an appropriate education, and everything within the underlying system must be directed to achieving that. This can be considered in terms of the *curriculum* and in terms of the schooling and other *structures* needed to translate the curriculum into practice. Underlying both sets of considerations is the central principle of integration.

First, consider the schooling and other structures required to deliver education. The predominant form of provision currently is segregated special schooling. This is evident from Table 3 which presents the summary of provision in fifty-eight countries reported in the UNESCO *Review*.

Table 3: Number of countries using different forms of provision

	No
Day special schools	54
Boarding special schools	53
Special classes in regular schools	44
Support teaching in regular classes	37
Schools in hospitals	31
Schools in other institutions	28

Source: UNESCO, 1988

When this is set alongside the figures in the Introduction showing how few children with disabilities receive an appropriate education, the limitations of existing schooling structures become very plain. It is difficult to see how they can meet the enormous shortfall in provision. These considerations led the UNESCO Consultation to the bald conclusion:

> Given the size of the demand and the limited resources available, the education and training needs of the majority of disabled persons cannot be met by special schools and centres (UNESCO Consultation . . ., op. cit., 1988).

This conclusion, if accepted, has major implications for special schools and ordinary schools alike. Special schooling is not the answer to the shortfall in special educational provision. Moreover, the resources currently devoted to special schools which serve a relatively small number of children need to be examined in the context of the widespread failure to make any special educational provision for large numbers of children. Ordinary schools too must come under scrutiny. The reason special schools are established is to cater for children whom ordinary schools fail. Ordinary schools that continue to be inadequate can hardly be offered as a serious alternative to special schools.

The way ahead has to be by bringing about change in both special schools and ordinary schools. Ordinary schools have to develop their teaching and curricula so that they cater for a greater diversity of pupil need than at present, while special schools must develop an outward-looking stance and take on significantly new roles.

In an ideal world there would be no special schools since every child would receive an appropriate education in a local community school. No country is near achieving that goal, apart perhaps from Italy, and it has to be assumed that special schools will feature on the map of special education for some time to come. But that does not mean they can continue unchanged.

Special schools have many advantages – concentration of expertise in teaching pupils with various disabilities, modified curricula and programmes of work, adapted buildings and equipment, training opportunities for staff, and links with local employers and post-school training agencies. These are the very things whose absence from ordinary schools makes them ineffectual in educating pupils with disabilities. The challenge to special schools then is to find

ways of sharing their expertise and resources, and of embedding them in a wider educational context.

Some special schools have already begun to develop outreach programmes. This can entail setting up working links with neighbourhood ordinary schools where staff and pupils are shared. Some special schools act as resource centres, providing information and consultancy to local schools, organizing support services for families and contributing to in-service training activities. Discharging these functions successfully requires considerable changes within special school staff. New skills must be developed and new attitudes fostered. Transmitting a skill to others is not the same as exercising it oneself, and operating across several schools or in the community is very different from working in the closed confines of a single special school. The most important changes required are attitudinal: staff who are jealous of their autonomy and intent on maintaining lines of professional demarcation will not set up effective collaboration. There must be a willingness to move beyond existing institutional bases and any status that may go with them, and to work co-operatively in whatever new structures may be advised.

The upshot of all this is that special schools of the future could be very different from now. Emphasis would move away from educating limited numbers of pupils in relative isolation towards acting as resource centres. The latter could encompass curriculum development, in-service training, the collection and evaluation of equipment and computer software, and specialist assessment, as well as advice and consultation on all matters relating to the education of pupils with disabilities.

These resource-centre functions are important in improving the standard of special educational provision regardless of where it is provided. By capitalizing on available experience and establishing a bank of information, materials and expertise, this offers a powerful model for making best use of frequently limited resources.

If special schools have to make changes, ordinary schools have to undergo revolution. Ordinary schools have generally failed pupils with disabilities and major school reform is necessary before they can make adequate provision for them. This reform must operate at two levels: the academic organization and curriculum provision of the school and the professional development of staff. The former requires rethinking the ways in which pupils are grouped for teaching purposes, the arrangements that schools can make for supplementary teaching and the modifications to the mainstream curriculum that teachers can make so as to give pupils with disabilities access to it. All of this forces major changes in teacher behaviour. Attitudes, knowledge and skills must all be developed to create and sustain a new kind of school where those previously disenfranchised are given an equal say and narrow concepts of normality are discarded.

Early childhood education

Experience in a wide variety of settings has shown the importance of early childhood education. The absence of appropriate stimulation in infancy and early childhood ranks alongside malnutrition and poverty as a major source of disadvantage and retarded development. This is true of all children but is especially so for children with disabilities. If sensory perception is

impaired, for instance, enhanced stimulation is required to compensate, but frequently what is offered is even less stimulation, not more. Indeed, the interruption of normal patterns of development arising from a disability is often more handicapping for the child than the direct consequences of the disability itself.

Despite this the provision of early childhood education is very restricted. Half of the countries in the UNESCO *Review* acknowledged that they had limited or no pre-school provision for children with disabilities. Where provision was available, it tended to be focused on those with overt physical or sensory impairments. It was also concentrated on urban areas, so that those living in the countryside had very little access to provision.

The forms of provision most commonly reported were early intervention programmes allied to home teaching, pre-school groups attached to special schools and placements, in nursery schools and classes for normal children.

Given the dearth of provision, almost any form of placement or support for early childhood education must be welcomed. There are two principles which should be given paramount importance, however: normalization and parental/community involvement. Even when children's development is very retarded, the developmental gap between them and age peers at this stage is relatively small – certainly in comparison with later – and every effort should be made to provide for them alongside peers and within a common organizational framework. As to involving parents and the community, this can hardly be over-stressed. Parents and the extended family are the principal, and in some cases the only, source of structured stimulation these children receive. Whatever little can be achieved by formal intervention, it can only be enhanced by being tied into and made to reinforce family activities and community relationships.

A particular challenge arises from the fact that much early intervention is not statutory. Where state support is provided, there is an additional problem of co-ordination because of the multiplicity of agencies concerned. Given these circumstances, it is important that all concerned – voluntary bodies, staff, parents and state officials – develop a common policy and approach. Overcoming the disadvantages resulting from disability must be the paramount concern of all so that the limited resources commanded by early childhood education have maximum beneficial effect.

PREPARATION FOR ADULT LIFE

Schooling is for all young people a form of preparation for adult life. The knowledge and skills acquired at school help them make their way when they leave it. For many young people the normal school curriculum is not sufficient preparation, be it for the world of work or for independent adult living, and specific preparation provided during the later years of school and subsequently is extremely beneficial.

All of this holds true in far greater measure for those who have disabilities. Many of these learn more slowly than their peers and may have limited academic achievements at the time of normal school-leaving age. More significantly, a great many will not yet be ready for

independent adult living. The conclusion to be drawn from this is not the traditional one that little can be done since independent living is a remote target, but rather that far more needs to be done precisely because existing support efforts have left this target so remote.

Regrettably, the amount of provision available to assist people with disabilities toward independent adult living is far too little. This holds true of developed and developing countries alike. More attention has been given in recent years in some countries and there have been numerous widely documented initiatives, but provision generally is sporadic at best and frequently non-existent. The UNESCO *Review* found that a majority of countries responding had limited or no post-school provision for those with disabilities.

The twin goals of action in this area are to help young people become economically active and lead lives that are as full and independent as possible.

Where special educational provision is well developed at school level, steps should be taken to ensure adequate preparation for life after school. This should cover both work and daily living. Preparation for work can include careers education and guidance, pre–vocational training and work experience. In some cases schools will provide direct vocational training, though substantial programmes in this area would normally be the responsibility of post–school agencies. The primary task for schools is to give young people, regardless of whether or not they have disabilities, a broad range of appropriate life skills rather than to train them for specific jobs.

Technical and vocational training must take account of the local labour market and industrial infrastructure. It must however be forward-looking in respect of technological developments, which can significantly expand opportunities for people with disabilities.

Training can be provided in specialist training colleges or training centres catering exclusively for people with disabilities. Many such establishments have been set up. There is a growing realization that those with disabilities can benefit from the training opportunities available to the general population. This is leading to initiatives to incorporate training provision for people with disabilities into the general system for technical and vocational education. This entails substantial alterations in the latter as well as major changes in attitude, but it is a step towards the normalization of experience for people with disabilities.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents of children with disabilities can play a major role in their education – if helped and allowed to. This can include assisting in school activities, contributing to assessment and curriculum planning, implementing programmes at home and monitoring progress.

This role is first and foremost a matter of principle: parents have the right to be involved in their children's education. It is also, particularly in developing countries, a matter of securing the best interests of children with disabilities. An account of a family support programme in Kenya opens with the claim that:

the greatest resource in a developing country for helping the disabled lead lives which are as fulfilling and productive as possible is a well-advised and supported family (Arnold, 1988).

Parents are the child's first and natural teachers, and it makes sense to help them discharge this role to the best of their ability.

The UNESCO *Review* gathered information on parental involvement in assessment procedure and placement decision-making. Practice generally fell short of the ideal of parents as partners. In some countries assessment procedures included asking parents for details on the child's early development, but in the majority of cases no role was reported for them. As for participating in decision-making, the best they could generally hope for was the reactive role of agreeing to, or taking issue with, the educational placement proposed for their child by the professionals.

There is little argument about the desirability of involving parents as partners in their children's education. The challenge now is to translate the rhetoric about it into practical action. The strategies to be adopted will vary from country to country and must be articulated with local conditions and resources in mind. There are three fundamental conditions that must be borne in mind in all instances.

1) Empowering parents. If parents are to play an effective part in their children's education – after having been excluded for so long – they must be enabled to do so. This entails sharing information with them? on their child's condition and programme and on the facilities available. Teachers and other professionals must value what parents do and take steps to build up their confidence. They must give parents appropriate programmes and other ways of structuring their children's experience. They must give them access to schools and their own professional sanctums. Above all, they must acknowledge their right to contribute to decisions that affect their children.

2) Changing the roles of professionals. None of the above can happen without major changes in the role perceptions of professionals. If parents are to be truly empowered, professionals have to be convinced of the need to demystify their professional domains. They must be willing to share their skills, or at least to deploy their skills through less expert hands. This in turn calls for new skills on their part – skills of dialogue, collaboration, team building and review. Above all, it requires on the part of many professionals a different concept of their professional domain and a different attitude to the exercise of their professional skills.

3) Working toward community participation. Community-based approaches to health, social welfare and rehabilitation have attracted much attention in recent years. They are seen to have particular relevance to developing countries where there is a vast pool of untapped human resources. Community-based approaches have not been developed extensively in special education but the model is likely to be just as appropriate to it as to other aspects of provision. It provides a natural content for parental involvement in special educational provision. Parents and family are part of a community, and a holistic involvement of the former also enrols the wider community in support and responsibility.

Training

Developments in special educational provision are critically dependent upon the quality of teaching available. This in turn depends on the opportunities for training and professional development open to teachers. Teacher training, particularly in-service training, takes on extra significance at a time of change. When conceptualizations of handicap are being revised and integration means that teachers in ordinary schools are expected to teach pupils with disabilities, training that was previously adequate may now need to be supplemented or restructured. This fact is a particular challenge in countries where basic teacher training is limited anyway.

The UNESCO *Review* painted a gloomy picture on training. Only a minority of the fifty-eight countries reported coverage of disability issues in the teacher training available to all teachers. In-service training opportunities for teachers in ordinary schools were similarly limited. A wide range of training opportunities was reported for teachers specializing in special education – a five-year course in a training college at one extreme to on-the-job instruction offered on an ad hoc basis at the other. A further UNESCO study, specifically on teacher training, provided more detailed information on training arrangements in fourteen countries (Bowman et al., 1985; Bowman, 1986). This showed the diversity of arrangements made, ranging from extended full-time courses in specialist training institutions to distance learning offered on a modular basis to serving teachers.

While it is difficult to generalize across so many countries at different stages of development, it seems clear that the main thrust of training at present is directed towards the specialist who will be working in segregated special schools. Such specialists are important and any training blueprint for the future should allow for a continuing supply of appropriate specialists. But there is also a major need for less highly trained workers. A great many children with disabilities could be helped in ordinary schools by relatively minor adjustments to the teaching provided in ordinary schools. Thus, a modest investment in low-level training could bring about major improvements in the special educational provision offered by schools.

A national plan for teacher training has to start with initial training. A major objective for all countries should be to ensure that all trainee teachers learn something about disabilities and be aware of some of their educational implications. They would not become experts in teaching pupils with disabilities but they would learn how to modify the curriculum content and teaching approach of the ordinary classroom so as to give access to substantial numbers of pupils with disabilities. They would acquire some skills in identifying and assessing pupils with disabilities. They would appreciate the importance of working with parents and develop appropriate skills. They would also know where their own competence stopped and how they could benefit from collaborating with specialists.

A national plan should also make provision for in-service training for classroom teachers and headteachers on matters relating to disability. Even if substantial improvements were made in initial training, this is at the edge of the problem and is best seen as an investment in the future. Most serving teachers for many years to come will not be affected by innovations in initial training. It is, moreover, those teachers who are long-serving and experienced who occupy the

positions of leadership in schools. They take the crucial decisions on the curriculum and effectively control the progress of any school reform.

Relevant in-service training can be provided in a great variety of ways. At the most basic level general awareness courses can be provided for individual teachers or, more usefully, for all the staff in a school. The latter can be arranged quite economically by occasional training days when staff come together without pupils. The training input for such school-based training can come from a member of the school's own staff who has been on a training course, from special school staff or from some other disability specialist in the neighbourhood. More substantial training can be provided by arranging for individual staff members to go on appropriate courses.

Training arrangements must also ensure a supply of specialists in disability. Some countries have separate training routes for ordinary teachers and for teachers specializing in disability. This may be compatible with a high level of expertise on the part of the latter, but it is not conducive to integrated education. Many countries incorporate training for specialists within the framework of training for all teachers and some require those intending to specialize in pupils with disabilities to first spend some time teaching in ordinary schools. However the initial training of specialist teachers is organized, it is important that regular opportunities for in-service training and professional renewal be offered to these teachers.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Educating pupils with disabilities is a complex matter. It is likely to be significantly improved if based on good information about the nature of these children's learning needs and how best to meet them.

Four broad areas of relevant research and development activity can be identified:

(i) Studies designed to separate out the different forms of disability, deepen understanding of them and clarify their educational implications. These should draw on a variety of areas of study – medical, psychological and sociological – in addition to education.

(ii) Incidence surveys to establish the extent of local need.

(iii) Development activities directed at curricula, teaching approaches and the deployment of resources. This is a very broad area, including activities as diverse as developing sign languages, devising individual learning programmes and mobilizing community resources for educational purposes.

(iv) Evaluation. This too is exceedingly broad but also quite essential. Educational programmes, particularly at a time of change, must be monitored to make sure that they are achieving their objectives and that resources are being used to maximum beneficial effect.

The UNESCO *Review* found that one–third of countries responding allocated separate national funds for research and development in special education, though the size of the allocations were

not recorded. The research topics cited with greatest frequency were integration, early intervention, the organization of special education, the transition from school to adult life and incidence surveys.

The priority given to research and development is worth noting, and it is to be hoped that the very modest expenditure on it will not be seen as an expendable luxury in the face of the inexorable pressure on service budgets. This is related to the major need for better information exchange. The UNESCO *Review* pointed out that

> much can be learned from others, research and curriculum development, from their legislative practices and from the ways in which they organize and deliver services (UNESCO, 1988).

No less important than maintaining a research and development capacity to service local needs is an efficient means of exchanging information with other countries and capitalizing on their information base.

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PART B

A structure for auditing provision

This part of the document provides a working framework that could assist national officers to carry out an audit of their system's practice with respect to special education provision. The major elements of provision are identified and a set of questions are put forward. Each question is accompanied by a commentary which sets it in context and points the way towards possible answers.

*Legislation**

1. Is the education of children and young people with disabilities governed by legislation?

Legislation has an important role to play in securing and maintaining educational provision for children and young people with disabilities. It helps to clarify and even articulate policy, lay down frameworks for provision, set out entitlements and channel resources. Legislation is not the same as provision, of course, and fine laws are no substitute for effective provision. But appropriate legislation is an important starting point without which service targets will be more difficult to achieve.

2. Is the legislation adequate?

The adequacy of a particular country's legislation has to be measured in the light of the national context. Naturally, some countries will have more extensive legislation than others – a fact that is likely to reflect the diversity and sophistication of a society's institutions as much as the level of resources available. Adequacy must then be seen in relative terms. Certain elements are so basic as to be essential in every case – the extent of coverage of children's needs, the relationship between needs and provision, resource allocation – whereas other elements may legitimately be deferred to a later stage. When assessing the adequacy of a country's legislation, it is important to take account of that country's current situation without, however, losing sight of what is still to be achieved.

3. If the legislation is limited, have major gaps been identified? Are steps being taken to fill the gaps?

Most countries have some educational legislation bearing on children and young people with disabilities. In some the extent of the legislation is quite limited and in many others there are

* Legislation is being used here to denote the offical enactments of a country's lawmaking body plus the supplementary documentation that is commonly used to guide interpretation of the official enactments and assist in their implementation.

major gaps in coverage. For example, certain groups are omitted from consideration or the legislation bears only on limited aspects of practice.

Where the legislative baseline is low, it has to be accepted that progress will take time. Developing new legislation is a lengthy process, in developed and developing countries alike, and little is gained by rushing through laws that do not take account of the particular needs and stage of development of a given country. What *can* be done is lay down a timetable for introducing new legislation; this can serve simultaneously to set out the scale of the task and to mobilize the resources necessary to do it properly.

4. Is the legislation concerning children and young people with disabilities part of general educational legislation or is it separate from it?

Most countries with relevant legislation have separate legislative statements. Historically, this stems from the slower recognition of the rights and learning capacities of those with disabilities, by comparison with other people. When their rights came to be recognized this was generally within a conceptual framework where their educational needs were seen to be qualitatively different from those of other pupils.

5. If separate, does it fit within the framework of general educational legislation?

The legislative framework for ordinary education is still developing in many countries. Whatever its stage of development, however, legislation for children and young people with disabilities should take account of it. Otherwise, the latter will continue to be seen as a separate group and full participation in society will remain needlessly difficult for them.

Examining the compatibility of the two frameworks can be done at various levels. At a general level it entails looking at the *goals of education* and establishing whether they are the same for all pupils and, where there are differences in objectives and expectations, whether these are well founded. It also entails looking at *entitlement to education* and establishing whether all children and young people have a comparable right to education. At the *level of practice*, compatibility of legislative frameworks can be examined in various aspects: administrative arrangements, at national and local levels; types of schools and other forms of provision; funding arrangements; and teacher training and conditions of service.

6. If legislation for pupils with disabilities is incorporated into general educational legislation, are there adequate safeguards for their rights and distinctive requirements?

In a few countries pupils with disabilities are deemed to be included in the general legislation on education for all pupils and there is no separate legislation governing their education. To the

extent that it emphasizes the normality of those with disabilities and facilitates their participation in the mainstream of society, this is highly desirable. There is a danger, however. Pupils with disabilities do have particular educational needs and it is important that generic formulations do not lose sight of these. Equality of status under the law and of access to provision does not necessarily mean equality of treatment. If there is a common framework for all pupils, it must be sensitive to the needs of individuals and be able to target resources so that differentiated provision can be made as required.

7. Does the legislation have a contemporary conceptual basis? What concept of disability underlies it? What are the characteristics of the children and young people who fall within it?

Many countries' legislation is based on concepts of handicap that date back many years and do not reflect present-day understanding. Deficit models based on medical notions of handicap have long dominated both legislation and provision. Now that there is a clear recognition of the interactive nature of learning difficulties and of the fact that pupils' difficulties at school depend at least in part on the nature of the schooling offered them, it is imperative for the legislation to move on. Frameworks based on simplistic and out-of-date concepts of handicap must be revised so as to reflect the nature of pupils' difficulties with conventional schooling more accurately.

Such rethinking will necessarily focus attention on the defining characteristics of those who are deemed to be disabled and in need of special education. Thus, it has been common to assume that pupils with physical impairments as a group require special education, even though many are academically able and could cope very well with ordinary schooling if they were guaranteed physical access and mobility. Such problems as are raised by these pupils' schooling have to do with architecture or building, not education. More generally, this shift in focus means paying greater attention to pupils' difficulties in *learning* and less to other characteristics that may or may not impinge on schooling.

8. Does the legislation provide a coherent framework for provision? Does it make sense of the different forms of provision on offer and explain why different pupils are placed in different types of provision?

Special educational provision takes numerous forms: special schools of various kinds; special classes, resource centres and other types of support in ordinary schools; and education provided outside schools. Often, this diversity of provision seems to reflect ad hoc responses to particular pressures rather than a planned effort to meet children's different needs. Some provision has a legislative basis but much of it, particularly innovative projects and provision made by the voluntary sector, frequently does not.

It is desirable that all educational provision for children and young people with disabilities be underpinned by an appropriate legislative basis. This would establish a rationale for the different forms of provision and help to reduce overlap and wasteful diversity. More

importantly, it would clarify the reasons why children are assigned to one form of provision rather than to another; this would help to ensure that children were treated differently from their peers for good reasons only.

9. Does the legislation lay down procedures for identifying children who need extra support and conducting assessments to establish what their needs actually are? How is this assessment related to resources?

Assessment is considered in some detail below. The point here is to establish whether there is a statutory basis for identifying and assessing children. Good practice in this area does not depend on legislation but the existence of statutory obligations makes it more likely that children will receive an appropriate assessment.

The outcome of an assessment will frequently be a statement that the child or young person needs special educational provision or other support of some kind. A balance has to be found between making an accurate statement of the child's needs and taking account of the resources likely to be available to meet them. If the assessment does not lead to specific recommendations for action it will have served little purpose; the assessment procedure should be on the child's side since it is the means whereby the extra resources that s/he needs are identified. Recommendations for extra resources must, however, be framed within the boundaries of possibility: the resources available in many countries are limited and assessment outcomes must take account of this.

10. Does the legislation guarantee children and young people with disabilities the right to education on the same basis as other children?

Children with disabilities are specifically excluded from the compulsory education requirement in many countries. This can mean that they receive no schooling or that they spend their school-age years in care institutions where education does not have a central priority. This is clearly unsatisfactory: not only are they being denied a basic human right but their disabilities are compounded with limited educational opportunities.

Countries with limited resources may argue that providing compulsory schooling for the majority ofchildren is sufficiently demanding without having to include all those with disabilities as well. This may be a valid pragmatic stance but it risks exposing children with disabilities to continued neglect. If the latter do not have a statutory right to education, the danger is that they will continually yield place to problems arising in the mainstream education system.

11. Does the legislation give adequate attention to implementation? Is it framed in such a way as to ensure that real change takes place as a result of it?

Fine words on a statute book do not in themselves lead to improved educational provision for children and young people with disabilities. Care must be taken to ensure that the intentions of legislation are translated into actual practice. Various steps are open to legislators to help achieve this: supplementing formal enactments with appropriate information and guidance; setting out a timetable for phased implementation; building in a review mechanism; allocating specific responsibility to particular groups of people, such as headteachers; and giving explicit recognition to parents' rights to be informed about and to intervene in their children's education.

None of these will make much difference without the necessary resources. Legislative intent must be matched with appropriate human and material resources. In many countries the resources available fall short of what might be desirable. That is not a reason for ignoring the resources dimension of legislation; rather, it is a reason for attending more closely to it. Detailed objectives need to be set out, and priorities established among them, in relation to the available resources and a realistic timetable. It is better to identify intermediate targets, albeit modest, and achieve them, than to insist on an over-ambitious vision that has no possibility of being realized.

Administration

12. Is the education of children and young people with disabilities the responsibility of the national education ministry?

The education ministry is responsible for educating pupils with disabilities in most, though by no means all, countries. When responsibility is vested elsewhere it is usually with a ministry of social affairs/social welfare. Even when the education ministry has the main responsibility, it is common for certain areas of activity (for instance pre-school provision and vocational training) or even certain groups of children to be the responsibility of other ministries. Where there is substantial voluntary sector provision, this often falls outside the remit of state administrations and is effectively answerable only to the voluntary bodies concerned.

Many of these exceptional arrangements are the result of historical accident and may well have been the best possibility at the time when they were introduced. It does however seem reasonable to assume that the education ministry should be the body responsible for the education of all pupils, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not. Where this is not the case and other arrangements are being made, all those concerned should be able to satisfy themselves that the alternatives are the best under prevailing circumstances. If the alternative arrangements are not in the best interests of the client group, steps must be taken to remedy the position.

13. How is the education of children and young people with disabilities organized within the education ministry? Do the administrative arrangements reflect the guiding principles by which their education should be organized?

The most common administrative arrangement is to have within the ministry of education a separate department dealing with the education of children and young people with disabilities. This runs alongside the mainstream administration, just as educational arrangements for this group frequently run parallel to mainstream educational provision. In some countries the degree of match between the two is limited as the age range is divided differently (between primary and secondary school) or the total age range covered is different.

Establishing separate administrative departments for pupils with disabilities is often seen as a major achievement and it certainly has been an important step in defending their interests and securing resources for their education. There is usually a price to pay, however. Separate administrative status reinforces and even legitimizes segregation in schooling arrangements, and it can be a major barrier to achieving integration.

It is necessary then to examine the administrative arrangements to establish whether they are in the best interests of the client group and whether they advance or impede the making of efficient educational provision.

14. Where responsibility for educating pupils with disabilities is dispersed among several ministries and possibly other agencies as well, are there adequate means of co-ordination between them?

Educating pupils with disabilities raises particular administrative problems because of the multiplicity of tasks to be carried out. Many workers other than teachers may be involved – care staff, therapists, psychologists, health and welfare personnel. In the majority of countries these workers – when available – are employed by, and subject to the administrative authority of, ministries other than education or are provided by voluntary organizations.

Co-ordination between these different agencies is of key importance. An overriding problem of service delivery in many countries is the lack of effective collaboration between the agencies. A mechanism that is found effective in some cases is to establish a co-ordinating body at national level. This would have representatives from the relevant government ministries, voluntary bodies and aid organizations. It would be charged with maintaining an overview of developments concerning children and young people with disabilities. It could also be given an explicit brief to foster information exchange and co-operation between the various bodies.

The details of how to secure effective collaboration must be worked out within each country. They are likely to be concerned with matters such as funding criteria, working procedures and staffing. If there is a national co-ordinating body, it should be well placed to identify the areas where collaboration is most needed and decide on the most productive ways of achieving it.

15. Where responsibility for educating pupils with disabilities falls outside the education ministry, is there effective co-operation with the education ministry? Are there any plans to transfer responsibility for these pupils to the education ministry?

A minority of countries secures the education of certain pupils with disabilities, for some or all of their schooling, outside the education ministry. (This is usually in a health or social welfare/social services ministry.) It is to be hoped in this situation that education is given a high priority in whatever institutions other than schools that are maintained. Children and young people with disabilities may have particular paramedical, therapeutic and care needs, but the need of a good education is not lessened by this fact. If anything it is greater. For that reason

appropriate links with the education ministry are likely to be helpful in ensuring that a proper curriculum is followed and that staff with appropriate skills are employed.

Many countries that had previously regarded pupils with disabilities as falling outside their education ministry have in recent years taken steps to transfer responsibility for them to education. This is likely to be in pupils' best interests, and it is to be hoped that others will question the appropriateness and efficacy of their present arrangements. There may have been good reasons in the past for entrusting children and young people with disabilities to health or social welfare ministries or for leaving their education in the hands of voluntary bodies. In many situations the original reasons are no longer relevant and change is long overdue. Where this is the case, steps should be taken to effect a transition – making sure in doing so that pupils' interests do not suffer in any way.

16. Is there adequate expenditure on administration?

Many countries lack the resources to provide adequate services, even at a basic level. It can be tempting for them to disregard the need for administrative support and to direct all of their resources, especially those of expertise, toward service delivery. Expenditure on administration must be kept in proportion and subject to regular review, but it would be shortsighted to scrimp on it unduly.

There are key tasks to be carried out by a national administration service – determining policy, planning, laying down standards, allocating resources, co-ordinating the different service elements and monitoring. If the administration is poorly resourced, the likelihood is that these tasks will be badly done, if at all. Far from being an expendable extra, an effective and appropriately resourced administrative service is essential to getting the best value from available resources.

17. Are the structure and functioning of the administrative services subject to regular review?

Educational and other services for children and young people with disabilities have evolved considerably over the past twenty years and are still changing rapidly in many countries. For this reason alone, it is important to keep the administration under review so that it corresponds to prevailing thinking and does not act to inhibit service developments. The administrative infrastructure generally changes more slowly than the services built on it, and the possibility of harmful mis-match must always be guarded against.

Aside from structural matters, the functioning of the administrative service must be subject to review. This requirement is frequently overlooked. Most systems operate on a hierarchical basis with accountability exercised from the top down. The national administration service is usually at the peak of the system, answerable only to politicians or senior officials who are seldom in a position to scrutinize in detail, and thus escapes the sort of monitoring which is taken for granted at lower levels in the system and which can be a major contributor to efficient working.

Early childhood education

18. Is the importance of early childhood education officially recognized? Are there policy statements concerning provision and support for parents?

The earliest years of life have great significance in all aspects of a child's development. This is a key period for linguistic, cognitive and emotional development as well as for physical growth, and most children develop rapidly during these years as a result of interaction with parents and others around them. Infants with disabilities do not have the same opportunities for interaction, whether because of limited mobility or hearing or vision, or for other reasons. As a result, their early development can be stunted; moreover, many of them need to be taught systematically what other children learn incidentally.

For these reasons early childhood education is particularly important for infants with disabilities. The national authorities have a significant part to play, both in making the provision and in supporting parents. Parents are the main educators of their children in the earliest years, and a major task for official agencies is to support parents in promoting the development of their young children with disabilities. This can take various forms: material support in dealing with practical problems, training in specific skills, personal support and counselling. Giving parents a serious role in both assessment and provision is also an important form of help.

The best efforts of parents need to be reinforced and extended by organized provision. The nature of appropriate provision will depend on the local context and resources but should encompass arrangements for identifying children with disabilities as early as possible, conducting assessments to establish what developmental and educational difficulties they may face, and providing pre-school education.

19. Are there adequate means of identifying infants with disabilities?

The first step in providing services for infants with disabilities and their parents is to identify those who need services. Some disabilities are evident at birth or soon after, but in many cases disabilities do not appear until later and even then only after careful attention to individual

children's developmental patterns. This means that a number of strategies have to be used to discover all those who need services.

Screening at birth is a first source of identification. To be effective, it requires that the birth take place in hospital or where there is access to a midwife or other health-care worker. It also requires that those carrying out the screening be able to recognize the early signs of disability. There will be many cases where something is amiss in an infant's responses, but the interpretation is not clear-cut; these call for more expert examination such as might be provided in specialist clinics. Providing access to such expertise in rural areas is a significant problem since the relevant expertise tends to be concentrated in urban hospitals.

After initial screening, regular checks throughout the early years of life are important as a means of identifying handicapping conditions that were not evident at birth. Here too the first prerequisite is the existence of a system for carrying out the checks, in rural as well as urban areas. Moreover, the health visitors or other workers who carry out the checks must have appropriate training, so that they can recognize and interpret the signs of disability, instruct parents in what to look out for and know when to seek an expert assessment.

20. Are there adequate arrangements for conducting assessments? Are parents involved appropriately?

When a child is discovered to have a disability or is failing to develop in a normal way, the precise nature of any difficulties must be diagnosed and the child's special needs assessed as soon as possible so that appropriate help can be provided. Assessment is not a once-for-all activity – it is essential to ongoing programme planning and delivery, and as a means of communicating about the child to those who need to know – but it is the initial means whereby the form of special provision required is determined.

Assessment should be initiated in many cases by health workers as a result of screening. Parents should have the right to ask for an assessment if they are concerned about their child's pattern of development. The need for assessment may emerge also from teachers' observations of children in pre-school programmes.

The formal arrangements for conducting assessments should embody certain principles. First, assessments should be conducted as quickly as possible after children have come to notice, so that any special provision they require can be made without delay. Moreover, early intervention can prevent minor problems from developing into major ones and can be a cost-effective form of provision.

Second, assessment should be geared to provision and should facilitate decisions about programme planning. Assessment must of course start from the problems as presented, but these must not be allowed to shape the outcomes of the assessment since other factors may be more important. Thus, detailed medical information about a child with spina bifida may be useful to a pre-school organizer, but it is unlikely to be the entire input to programme planning.

Third, assessment should be as detailed as necessary but no more so. This has implications both for the comprehensiveness of the information collected and for cost-effectiveness in deploying what may be scarce professional resources. In practical terms, it suggests a need for assessment to be conducted in stages, with each stage drawing on a wider range of expertise and yielding more information on the child. The lowest stage would be the simplest, possibly completed by a pre-school organizer; the highest stage would be a full multi-professional assessment, drawing on the entire range of available specialists as required. Assessment would be conducted at the lowest level possible, but would be continued at a higher level if the child's evident needs or programme outcomes demanded it.

Fourth, parents should be involved in assessments both as a matter of right and as a matter of good practice. In many countries parents' right to be present when their child is assessed is formally recognized and this is to be commended. Parents should have access to the information on which assessment outcomes are based and should be told these as soon as possible; if necessary, steps should be taken to explain technical matters to them. Parents can make a substantive contribution to the assessment process from their knowledge of their child and by making specific observations in consultation with the professionals; the latter see the child on one or at best a few occasions and can observe a limited set of behaviours only, whereas parents see their child in a wide range of contexts.

21. Is there an adequate level of pre-school provision? Does it give high priority to supporting parents and building on their efforts? Where provision is formally organized, are parents actively involved?

Parents should be regarded as the first educators of their children. This is no less important for children with disabilities than for other children; if anything, it is even more so because of their need for structured and stimulating environments. This principle has two major implications for national authorities and other agencies: their primary responsibility is to provide direct and indirect support to parents of children with disabilities in the earliest years, and when formal provision is made, this should be done in such a way as to reinforce and build on the efforts of parents, and should involve the parents in the provision as much as possible.

Support to parents can take many forms:

Training. Parents benefit from acquiring a range of observation, management and teaching skills. Some of the skills they may have anyway, but formal instruction in systematic observation and particular teaching techniques is likely to be extremely beneficial. Many parents, who feel confused or distressed by their child's pattern of behaviour, appreciate information and advice on management techniques. Any such instruction is likely to be particularly useful if the skills being taught are demonstrated with the parents' own children.

Child management. Children with disabilities need stimulating and structured environments. This is best achieved by means of carefully planned programmes based on systematic observation of the child and regular feedback on his/her response to the programme. Such programmes need to be worked out jointly by parents and visiting professionals. The parents'

intimate contact with and knowledge of the child, and the professionals' broader experience and theoretical knowledge, are both required.

Liaison. Parents of children with complex disabilities may need to be in touch with a variety of official agencies. For some parents such contact is confusing and difficult, and assistance in dealing with officialdom is a source of much reassurance.

Personal support. The long-term care of a child with a severe disability can be deeply distressing and parents may need some personal support to enable them to keep going. Visiting professionals can supply some of this simply by lending a sympathetic ear or more formally by providing counselling. They can also assist by putting parents in touch with each other or facilitating self-help groups.

These various forms of support must be provided in whatever way local circumstances and resources permit. A common prerequisite is for an appropriately skilled person to be available to visit parents at home. Where resources allow, the use of peripatetic teachers organized into an advisory and support service is found to be an effective mode of organization. This makes it possible to provide home-visiting teachers, with different specialties. In-service training can be provided within the service as required, plus a core of staff to run parent workshops, promote self-help groups and organize toy libraries.

As well as providing support for individual parents, national authorities have a responsibility to secure the organization of pre-school provision for children with disabilities. This can take numerous forms: nurseries, nursery classes and units attached to either special schools or ordinary schools, combined centres offering education and day care, playgroups and opportunity groups.

Any such provision must be guided by a number of considerations.First, the position of parents is central and every effort should be made to involve them in both the management and the day-to-day running of provision. Giving parents a key role in this way marks a departure from much current practice and may be perceived as threatening by some professionals, but there are numerous examples of successful partnerships between parents and professionals where both sides complement each other to the benefit of the children.

Second, it is not necessary or even advisable for all pre-school provision to be organized by the official authorities. A good deal of provision, especially playgroups and opportunity groups, is effectively organized at local level by parents or other community groups. The task of the official authorities is to organize some provision such as nursery schools directly, and to facilitate and give indirect support to other forms of provision without taking on a leadership or management role. Thus the authorities may provide accommodation for playgroup and day nurseries, arrange training for group leaders and support networking between parents, while leaving direct responsibility for the provision in local hands.

Third, pre-school provision of every kind for children with disabilities should include children without disabilities. General pre-school provision should encompass children with disabilities as a matter of course, and in an ideal world that had adequate pre-school provision for all

children there would be no need of special arrangements for those with disabilities. Given the paucity of provision and the latter's overwhelming need of it, special arrangements do have to be made and it is important that these allow maximum integration between children with disabilities and their peers.

Fourth, particular efforts may need to be taken where children with disabilities living in rural areas are concerned. The services and professional support that are provided in centres of population may be less available, and community-led initiatives are likely to play a major role. It is incumbent on national and regional authorities to recognize the particular problems experienced by these children and their families, and to find ways of stimulating and supporting appropriate community activity.

Special educational provision

22. Is there a range of special educational provision for pupils with disabilities?

Pupils with disabilities are a very diverse group and their educational requirements are no less varied. Some pupils need a highly structured environment with considerable individual attention, others benefit from access to sophisticated equipment or specialist staff, while yet others need little more than minor adjustments to normal schooling.

The response of education systems around the world to the educational needs of pupils with disabilities has been to establish many different kinds of special educational provision, ranging from segregated special schools to fully integrated provision in ordinary schools. This range is often described in terms of a rough continuum, so far as the educational experience of the individual pupil is concerned:

i) Full-time placement in special school
ii) Part-time in special school, part-time in ordinary school
iii) Full-time placement in a unit or special class
iv) Part-time in special class, part-time in ordinary class
v) Placement in ordinary class, withdrawal for specialist work
vi) Placement in ordinary class, in-class support
vii) Placement in fully integrated class.

The actual pattern of special educational provision varies a good deal because of local circumstances and tradition, but also because special education is not sufficiently developed to permit precise matching of pupil needs to organizational arrangement. For that reason alone it is probably beneficial to have available a variety of organizational arrangements: pupils with disabilities are more likely to receive an appropriate education if special educational provision of many different kinds is on offer. The variety of local situations is a further argument for diverse provision: it is necessary to be flexible in order to capitalize on available resources and to respond to individual needs.

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23. Is there adequate information about the range of special educational provision available, both locally and nationally?

Information about the special educational provision on offer is required in the interests of both equity and efficiency. An overview is needed, at appropriate levels, of what special educational provision is available, who is served by it and what resources it commands. This information should be kept up to date and made readily available to parents, administrators and professionals.

At local level parents need the information in order to make informed choices about what is best for their children. Administrators and professionals need it in order to guide placement decisions as well as to manage the resources available as efficiently as possible; a comprehensive picture is essential to avoid needless duplication and fill any gaps in provision. At national level a good information base is an essential step at every stage of policy formulation, planning, implementation and review; if these activities are not guided by and based firmly on a comprehensive knowledge of what provision there is, the likelihood is that resources will not be used to best effect and the needs of pupils with disabilities will not be met as well as they might be.

24. Is there a coherent framework for the special educational provision on offer? Is it subject to strategic planning? Is special educational provision seen as part of the total educational provision made, at local and national levels?

While diversity of provision is generally desirable, there is need of a coherent framework that integrates the different elements of provision into a unified whole and relates special educational provision to the educational provision made for all pupils. Diversity for its own sake is hardly a legitimate objective and will almost certainly lead to waste of resources.

This is especially important in the light of the historical development of special educational provision. In many countries it has developed in an ad hoc way, often owing more to particular initiatives by voluntary bodies and far-sighted individuals than to coherent national planning. This can result in a patchwork of provision that may or may not be comprehensive but is frequently incoherent and inefficient.

Strategic planning, so important for all state educational provision, takes on a particular imperative where pupils with disabilities are concerned. Whatever definition of disability is used, there is a sizeable number of such pupils. Their educational needs are among the most pressing, yet they are very often neglected. When their education is taken seriously, considerable resources are required. For all these reasons, it is essential to have a developed strategy that guides the allocation of resources within a coherent framework and helps to maximize their beneficial effect.

A framework for special educational provision has to encompass numerous dimensions, setting out norms and guidelines for practice in respect of each and drawing attention to the interconnections between them. The following are among the dimensions to be considered:

Admission and exit criteria. Which children are deemed to require special educational provision? How are they chosen? What assessment and other information is gathered? What procedures are used to determine that they do not need it anymore?

Staffing. What staffing levels – teachers, assistants and other staff – are judged necessary for pupils with different disabilities ? What are their respective roles? What training is provided for them?

Curriculum and assessment. How does the curriculum offered to pupils with disabilities relate to the mainstream curriculum? What is the rationale for any modifications to content or teaching approach? What arrangements are made for monitoring and recording pupils' progress?

Physical environment. Where is the special educational provision made? What special facilities are required? To what extent can these be provided by modifying mainstream buildings, or do they require separate premises?

Financing. How is special educational provision financed? If unit costs for pupils with disabilities are higher than for other pupils, is there an explicit rationale for this? Where special educational provision is made in ordinary schools, how are any additional resources channelled to the schools?

Parents. What roles are assigned to parents? How much contact is there between home and school? What steps are taken to inform parents about their children's education and involve them in it?

Relationship to mainstream provision. How does any special educational provision made relate to mainstream provision? Do they fit within a common framework, or is special educational provision conceived as something quite distinct?

External support. What support is available from outside the school, for instance from support services or community links? How is any such support integrated with the work of the school?

25. Are ordinary schools prepared to educate pupils with disabilities? What steps must they take if they are to do so successfully?

One of the major developments in the education of pupils with disabilities in recent years has been the so-called integration movement. This is based on the belief that pupils with disabilities should not be segregated from age peers and should be educated alongside them to the greatest extent possible. Seen variously as a pedagogical issue, an organizational matter or a moral/civil rights question, the principle of integration has gained widespread acceptance and few argue against greater inclusion of pupils with disabilities in ordinary schools.

Translating the principle into practice is an altogether different matter. Practice does in fact vary sharply from country to country, with some countries educating almost all pupils with

disabilities in ordinary schools while others segregate as many as 5 per cent of the age group into separate schools and institutions.

The fundamental requirement of integration is to ensure that pupils with disabilities receive a good education in the ordinary school setting. This often requires considerable changes in the ordinary school. The reason so many pupils with disabilities do not attend ordinary schools is that ordinary schools cannot cater for them, and until they have developed a capacity for educating pupils with disabilities it is difficult to argue that the latter should attend ordinary schools.

How must ordinary schools change if they are to provide the requisite educational setting for pupils with disabilities? This can be seen in relation to the features that characterize existing good practice. At a general level, it is possible to discern four common charactistics of schools that successfully educate pupils with disabilities.

Clear policy. Schools need a clear policy affirming the importance of all their pupils and ensuring that any pupils who need additional resources, for whatever reason, are no less valued. Ideally, such a policy should be articulated into a written statement and consciously adopted by the staff. If this is not feasible, what is essential is that such a policy is understood and accepted by all members of the school and that it informs their work and relationships.

Appropriate curriculum and academic organization. The curriculum is at the core of the process since the design and delivery of the curriculum provide the central definition of a school. The requirement here is to respond to the individual needs of pupils with disabilities within a common curriculum framework. Pupils with disabilities do not need, and certainly do not benefit from, a totally separate curriculum. What they do require are individual programmes of work and modified teaching approaches, and it is for the school to engage in the requisite curriculum and pedagogical development. All of this must be underpinned by corresponding changes to the school's academic organization – timetabling, pupil grouping and arrangements for specialist teaching – because they provide the framework within which teachers deliver the curriculum.

Sufficient skilled staff. The quality of staff and the way in which they are used determine as much as anything how successful a school will be in educating pupils with disabilities. Staffing levels generally need to be higher because of the extra challenges posed by those pupils. Staff need additional skills in assessment, curriculum development and pedagogy. It is important that staff with specific expertise share it with colleagues so that pupils with disabilities can be taught by as wide a range of teachers as possible. Some of the requisite skills, for instance physiotherapy, are unlikely to be available within the school and arrangements may have to be made to procure them from external sources.

Effective links with home and community. To be successful, educating pupils with disabilities entails a partnership between home and school. The dimensions of this partnership have been set out above in relation to early childhood education. If ordinary schools are to take on the education of these pupils, they must build up the partnerships and secure the involvement of parents in their children's education. In many societies the involvement of the community is

important also both as an additional resource for the school and as a means of guaranteeing continuity of experience between school integration and normalization within the community.

26. Are special schools developing new roles? Are they taking steps to become an integral part of the overall educational provision?

Special schools are a major resource in the education of pupils with disabilities. They have pioneered a great deal of provision and have been the sole source of education for many pupils. Change is necessary, however, if they are to continue to play a central role. Some special schools may indeed be no longer necessary, but for the majority evolution and the adoption of new roles are what will be required in the medium-term future.

The key challenges for special schools are to find ways of supporting ordinary schools in the task of educating pupils with disabilities and, at a time when the principle of integration is increasingly accepted, to provide an education of high quality for those pupils still in special schools. One way in which special schools can respond to those challenges is to establish working links with ordinary schools. Such links are in their infancy in many countries but there is sufficient experience of them for their potential to be clearly manifest.

Link arrangements entail three main components: pupils, staff and resources. Pupils from a special school may go to an ordinary school, individually or in groups, for a few lessons or for most of the school week, for a specific limited purpose or with a view to eventual transfer. Staff deployment is a major component of outreach programmes. Teachers from special schools can engage in three broad sets of activities when they go to an ordinary school: teaching; supporting mainstream colleagues by providing information and advice, demonstrating teaching approaches and running in-service training sessions; and monitoring the link arrangements, particularly where they entail substantial pupil movement. Ordinary school staff can usefully contribute to the special school curriculum, particularly where the latter lacks specific subject expertise. Link arrangements can also entail the transfer or sharing of material resources.

The implication of all this is that special schools have to change, possibly even in radical ways. They have to become more outward-looking. They should establish effective working links with their neighbourhood ordinary schools and strive to become an integral part of the overall educational provision made. The very concept of the special school may need to change as it loses its isolation and takes on advisory, training and information dissemination roles.

Transition from school to adult life

27. Is the complex nature of the transition from school to adult life appreciated? Are there policies to support young people with disabilities during this process? Are the policies designed to normalize the experience of the young people as much as possible, while providing the specific assistance they need?

Becoming an adult is a slow and gradual process, varying greatly from country to country, and even within countries, dependent as it is upon a mix of cultural, economic and legal factors. The process is complicated and made difficult for many young people by their disabilities and by society's responses to them, and for that reason alone merits explicit attention from the national authorities.

The domain of action can be divided into four broad headings: employment, useful work and valued activity; personal autonomy; community involvement, social and leisure activity; and domestic living. Young people with disabilities are likely to need help in each of these areas depending on the nature of their disabilities. Given the diversity of the areas and, as a consequence, of agencies that may be involved, it is important to have explicit policies to guide and co-ordinate activities. A further reason for the authorities to be involved is that effective policies in the area of transition increase the likelihood that young people with disabilities will become self-sufficient and not require lifelong support from the state.

The policies should encompass school and post-school provision. They should take account of the diversity of agencies and interests involved. Above all, they should be based on meeting the needs of the individual to the greatest extent possible, within the framework of normal experience.

28. Do schools take specific steps to prepare pupils with disabilities for adult life? Does this action encompass a broad set of goals – vocational competence, independent living and adult status? Is this preparation

provided both in ordinary schools catering for pupils with disabilities and in special schools?

Schooling is for all young people a form of preparation for adult life. The knowledge and skills acquired at school help them make their way when they leave it. For many young people the normal school curriculum is not sufficient preparation for the world of work or for independent adult living, and specific preparation provided during the later years of school is extremely beneficial. This is particularly true of those who have disabilities. Many of them learn more slowly than their peers and may have limited academic achievements at the time of normal school-leaving age. A great many will not yet be equipped or ready for independent adult living.

The preparation required must cover both daily living and the world of work. Preparation for daily living encompasses the range of skills necessary to live in society as an independent adult. These include personal skills such as body care and presentation, domestic skills such as simple cooking and money management, and social skills such as participating in leisure activities and dealing with institutions. Preparation for work must take account of the job opportunities likely to be available. In general terms, it can include careers education and guidance, pre-vocational training and work experience. In some cases schools provide direct vocational training, but substantial involvement in this area is more appropriately carried out by post-school agencies if available.

Preparing pupils with disabilities for adult life is a particular challenge for ordinary schools that run integration programmes. Many special schools have devoted great efforts to this area and have well-established leavers' courses. They also benefit from the greater control they can exercise over pupils' environments and exposure to the outside world. Ordinary school staff have to find ways of ensuring that pupils do not miss out on the systematic preparation they would receive in a good special school, and they must often do so with fewer resources and in contexts that allow for less control.

29. Are there arrangements for assessing young people with disabilities towards the end of schooling and subsequently? Do the assessments conducted cover all aspects of the individuals' functioning? Do they provide information that is relevant to employment and independent living?

Even when detailed assessments have been conducted during the school years, it is important to carry out a review and engage in further assessment towards the end of schooling. This should consider the implications of the young person's disabilities for his/her future and evaluate the suitability of the options available after leaving school.

This assessment should be guided by a number of principles. First, it should be geared to action, not categorization. The outcome should be a plan which builds on the individual's strengths and maximizes his/her development toward independence in practical ways. This calls for information on the young person's responses to real-life situations rather than test results or

other academic information. Second, it should be multi-faceted and give information on a wide range of aspects of the young person's functioning. This will often entail the involvement of several different professionals, particularly those concerned with careers guidance and employment. Third, the aspirations of the young people themselves should be taken into account. It may be necessary in some cases for these aspirations to be articulated by parents, but it must be remembered the pupils they are no longer children and they must be treated as dependent minors to the least extent possible.

30. When young people reach the end of compulsory schooling, is there provision available to assist them in the transition to adult life? What forms does this take? Is it integrated with the provision available to young people who do not have disabilities?

The end of compulsory schooling marks a significant stage in the transition from school to adult life. Childhood is over and preparation for the future assumes a greater urgency. The guiding principles in any preparation undertaken for young people with disabilities are to help them become economically active and lead lives that are as full and independent as possible. In general terms, this preparation should encompass the four areas set out above: work, independence, social life and domestic living.

Vocational training is a particularly important element of preparation: lack of training opportunities has frequently meant that people with disabilities have not been economically active or have had to work at a level below their real ability. The official authorities have a twofold responsibility: to provide training, and to support and co-ordinate the full range of training opportunities on offer. Where possible, young people with disabilities should be included in the general system for technical and vocational education; this should be adapted as necessary so that those with disabilities can benefit from the training opportunities available to the general population.

The content of training should be pragmatic and geared to the local labour market. It must equip young people with the skills needed for the jobs they are likely to get. It must not be unduly narrow, however, or based on stereotypes about the sorts of jobs that people with disabilities can do, such as basket-making for blind people. It is for trainers, especially where they have links with employers, to analyse job requirements in creative ways that increase their accessibility to people with disabilities. The new information technologies offer significant possibilities in this regard and it is important for training to take account of them by job analysis and skills transmission.

Regarding the organization of provision after the end of compulsory schooling, there are a number of possibilities:

Extended time at school. Some special schools run programmes lasting two or three years for their older students. These entail quite specific training for adult life, possibly including supported experience of life outside school. Many such schools find it helpful to mark the transition from the normal school years to these programmes very clearly and ensure

that the students in question are treated as young adults rather than as schoolchildren.

Ordinary schools that provide for pupils with disabilities can likewise arrange specific programmes for their older students. These programmes should be established, to the greatest extent possible, within the framework of corresponding programmes for pupils without disabilities.

Mainstream further education. Patterns of vocational and further education vary greatly from country to country. Whatever the local provision, it is important that young people with disabilities be given access to it. This requires support, especially careers guidance, for the young person since the range of options and the more open environment may be disorienting after the sheltered confines of schooling. More important, however, are the changes likely to be necessary in the college or other provision in order to allow meaningful access to it. There are many barriers – physical, curricular and attitudinal – that prevent young people with disabilities from benefiting from the courses on offer. These barriers must be overcome and appropriate courses or modifications of courses offered. Teaching staff must become aware of the special needs of students with disabilities and given training as necessary.

Specialist further education. A number of countries have developed specialist post-school provision for young people with disabilities. This takes the form of colleges intended for those with specific disabilities, such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, and motor handicap. These provide intensive training and preparation for adult life but suffer the disadvantage of being out of the mainstream.

When specialist resources are scarce, it is sometimes deemed more efficient to concentrate them in a few locations; this does mean that the young people in question, many of whom will have attended special schools, continue to be segregated from their peers for many years more.

Segregation apart, these colleges also raise the question of disability-specific versus comprehensive provision. Specialist colleges tend to the former since they mostly cater for young people with a particular type of disability. The rationale of disability-specific provision is called into question, however, by the increasing recognition of the common interests of people with different disabilities and the dangers of provision being determined by stereotypes rather than by individuals' actual needs. There is also the problem of how to make appropriate provision for individuals with more than one disability. In the light of all this, the task for the national authorities is to assess to what extent comprehensive, cross-disability services can be provided without foregoing the advantages of the disability-specific services and to give the necessary policy and resourcing support.

31. Is the disabled young person's experience of the transition from school to adult life coherent? Is there continuity between the different stages and his/her involvement with the different agencies? Do the various agencies co-ordinate their efforts?

There are many facets to the disabled young person's experience of the transition from school to adult life and a range of different agencies – training, social welfare, health, housing and employment – may be involved. Not all of the agencies are available in every situation of course, but even when they are, the danger is that the young person's experience of them will be piecemeal. Thus, vocational preparation may be out of line with preparation for adult living, welfare policies may clash with efforts to promote employment, and so on.

This is unhelpful to the individual young person and may well be deeply confusing. It is also an inefficient use of what in the vast majority of countries are extremely scarce resources. One step that can be taken regardless of the level of resources is to designate a single person to provide a link with whatever services and agencies are relevant. Such a role has been formally established in a few countries; it is found to provide an important point of reference for young people with disabilities as they move from school to the adult world and to give them greater continuity between the different stages of transition.

It is important also for the different agencies to co-ordinate their efforts. This entails taking a global view of the transition process and ensuring that it is reflected in policy, planning and service delivery. At the risk of creating an extra layer of bureaucracy, joint structures must be established at national, regional and local levels to ensure the services do not overlap or confound each other and that they build on each other's efforts to maximize the disabled young person's progress towards independence.

Professional development

32. Where initial teacher training is the standard route into teaching, is there some coverage of disability issues in the basic training on offer? How extensive isit? Is it related to teaching pupils with disabilities? Where available, is it part of the training curriculum followed by all students or is it optional, followed by some students only?

Large numbers of children and young people with disabilities attend ordinary schools and it is likely that many more could do so given appropriate support. This means that all class teachers should know something about disabilities and be aware of their educational implications. They do not have to be expert in teaching pupils with disabilities, but their initial training should give them a positive, informed orientation toward disability as well as a good understanding of what can be achieved in their school and using services available locally.

This proposal would entail a considerable redirection of the training effort in many countries where the prevailing emphasis is on producing a relatively small number of highly trained specialists who will work in segregated special schools. It is important to have specialists but there is also a major need for less highly trained staff. A very great number of pupils with disabilities could be helped in ordinary schools by relatively minor adjustments to the teaching provided in ordinary schools.

Initial training then should equip all teachers with the skills needed to modify curriculum content and the teaching approaches used in the ordinary classroom so as to give curriculum access to larger numbers of pupils. They would acquire some skills in identifying and assessing pupils with disabilities. They would appreciate the importance of working with parents and developing appropriate skills. They would also know where their own competence stopped, and when – and how – to collaborate with specialists.

33. Are training opportunities available for teachers specializing in educating pupils with disabilities?

Educating pupils with disabilities presents particular challenges and it is important that there are teachers who have the full range of specialist skills that may be required. There has to be a

balance between building up the supply of specialist teachers and equipping all teachers with some appropriate skills. The number of specialist teachers in a system must relate to the total resources available to that system. It is important to have some specialists, however, and appropriate provision needs to be made for their training.

Training for specialists is provided in many different ways. Some countries offer extended full-time courses in specialist training institutions; others make use of distance learning to offer training on a modular basis to serving teachers. However the training is provided, it is important that it should serve children's interests and not act as a block on positive developments. For example, if training is geared to preparing staff to work in segregated institutions, there is a danger that the available specialists will not be best placed to advance integration policies.

34. How does specialist training in this area relate to the general training provided to all teachers?

Specialist training for teachers in this area often builds on basic teacher training: those wishing to specialize in teaching pupils with disabilities receive further training lasting a year or more after they have completed basic training. It is common also for at least two years' teaching experience to be required before teachers can proceed to specialist training.

These requirements have much to commend them. They are important factors in normalizing the educational experiences of pupils with disabilities and can help break down the barriers between specialist schools and ordinary schools. Thus, where teachers of pupils with disabilities are trained quite separately from other teachers, the possibilities of mutual understanding and collaboration are far fewer. Some countries that have provided separate initial training for the former group have discontinued it in recent years. Countries still providing such separate training might consider it opportune to examine this practice to see if their training needs could be better met without it. Similarly, some countries that allow teachers to specialize in teaching pupils with disabilities without having had any prior experience of teaching other pupils might wish to examine that policy.

35. Do all serving teachers have appropriate access to in-service training in relation to teaching pupils with disabilities? Are they encouraged to take up the opportunities? What proportion of teachers actually receive in-service training and how regularly?

In-service training is the key to improving educational provision for pupils with disabilities. Even if substantial reforms are made in initial training, they will take a long time to work through the system and are best seen as an investment in the future. Most serving teachers will not be affected by innovations in initial training for many years.

In-service training can be provided in a great variety of ways – short occasional courses provided in the schools where teachers work, regional and national courses of varying duration, long courses building up to a diploma or other qualification and extended postgraduate work.

Countries need to examine the range of training opportunities on offer and how they relate to identified needs. In particular, if there are large numbers of pupils with disabilities in ordinary schools, it is important that staff acquire some of the skills appropriate to teaching them.

The availability and take-up of in-service training opportunities must be established. For instance, if the opportunities are restricted to small groups of metropolitan élites, the impact on the system as a whole is likely to be limited. More generally, the factors that bear on providing in-service training need to be identified and any necessary action taken. Expertise and time are two of the critical factors: there is need of a sufficient number of experienced staff with expertise in training adults, and teachers have to have time away from classroom duties. In-service training has to be recognized as a valuable professional activity in its own right and appropriate encouragement and support given to it.

36. Are classroom assistants given training for the important work they do? Do they have on-the-job opportunities to develop their skills?

Classroom assistants can play a major role in the education of pupils with disabilities, in both special schools and ordinary schools. They can carry out a wide range of functions: providing physical care, acting as para-professionals to implement therapy programmes drawn up by professionals and contributing to pupils' education under the class teacher's instruction. When the supply of fully trained teachers is limited, the assistants' contribution is particularly valuable.

Appropriate training is necessary if classroom assistants are to be used to maximum advantage. People recruited to work as classroom assistants frequently have had no prior training; if they have had any, it is likely to be in general child care. In-service training is therefore required. This can take the form of on-the-job instruction or formal courses for which an appropriate time allocation is made.

37. Is there any joint training for the different professionals involved in educating pupils with disabilities? Are there opportunities for them to share perspectives and build up a common understanding about their respective contributions?

There are many professionals who can be involved in educating pupils with disabilities – teachers, psychologists, therapists, social workers, doctors and para-medical staff. Each has an important but distinctive role to play. The more the different professionals collaborate on the basis of common understandings, the more fruitful their contributions to the educational process will be.

In practice, the different professionals frequently work in isolation from each other. This may be due to structural barriers or inter-professional jealousies, but in many cases it arises, at least in part, from the fact that different professional groups bring their own perspectives and skills to the task and do not have an adequate appreciation of the perspectives and skills of their

colleagues. The net result is, at best, a failure to capitalize to the full on the range of expertise that is available and, at worst, harmful disputes that do not serve pupils' interests.

Appropriate training can help to ensure that the different professionals have some understanding of each other's roles and competences. This can be achieved in the fullest form by means of joint training whereby members of different professional groups have elements of their initial training in common or share in-service training courses. Another approach is to include in the training of a given group specific inputs on the roles of colleagues from other professional groups. Formal training is not always necessary: when different professionals do have occasion to work together, appropriate attitudes and ways of working can do much to build up a common set of understandings.

38. Is there a national plan for training staff concerned with educating pupils with disabilities?

Relevant training has developed in an ad hoc way in many countries. This frequently results in provision that is uneven or lacking in co-ordination, which in turn leads to waste and difficulty in making best use of limited resources.

A national plan would encompass initial and in-service training for teachers and other staff, and set out a framework in which priorities could be assessed and resources directed. It would not itself produce more resources but it would assist planners to make best use of existing resources. In setting out a framework and identifying gaps in provision, it could strengthen any case being made for additional resources.

Support services

39. Is there an adequate range of support services to assist schools in the task of educating pupils with disabilities? Are the services adequately staffed to meet the needs of schools? Where there are shortfalls, what action is being taken to deal with them?

Schools require support services across a broad front if they are to make effective provision for pupils with disabilities. The range of specialist knowledge and skills required is far greater than even highly trained school staff possess. This is particularly the case if pupils with disabilities are being educated in ordinary schools.

A broad division in the support services can be made between those which are specifically educational and are usually provided from within the education sector, and those which support the educational process indirectly and are often provided from non-education sources. The former include advisory teachers and learning support specialists, peripatetic specialists in particular handicapping conditions such as hearing impairment and visual impairment, and educational psychologists. The latter can include a very diverse group of staff – speech therapists, physiotherapists, doctors, careers advisers, rehabilitation officers and social workers.

Different countries will have differents ways of organizing the various support services. What is important for schools is that they have access to the services when they need them. For this to happen, a first prerequisite is adequate staff with the necessary specialist training, distributed sufficiently well around the country.

If there are gaps in provision, these should be documented accurately and in detail so that appropriate action can be taken. This will generally mean increasing the resources committed to training but it may also entail taking steps to enhance the mobility of specialist staff. This may, for instance, be the only way of dealing with the common scarcity of specialist staff outside large centres of population.

40. How do the support services relate to schools?

Schools have the responsibility for educating pupils with disabilities. Specialists who provide help from outside the school must remember that their task is to offer ***support:*** so far as education is concerned, their role is secondary. This can be a source of tension, particularly in the case of high-status specialists who have limited contact with schools. It is important for all specialists to appreciate the limitations of their expertise in educational contexts and they should not expect teachers to defer to them in educational matters.

The relationship between support services and schools can of course be put more positively. It is for the support services to provide information, insights and advice that will enable schools to discharge their task of educating pupils with disabilities more effectively; where the support services provide therapy or other specific programming, this must be done within the curriculum framework laid down by the school. All this points up the importance of dialogue and effective communication between both sides.

What happens at school level depends on local factors and personalities. Desired outcomes can, however, be facilitated by the existence of appropriate structures and guidelines. It is helpful, for instance, if explicit procedures and responsibilities are laid down in respect of pupil assessment. When all those concerned know what they are required to do, how they should relate to other participants and what the limits of their responsibility are, there is a greater likelihood of fruitful collaboration that serves the interests of children.

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